1608/4335.

THE GOOD OLD WAY RECOMMENDED.

TWO DISCOURSES,

DELIVERED ON THURSDAY, 18. APRIL, 1793, THE DAY APPOINTED BY THE KING TO BE OBSERVED AS A NATIONAL FAST.

BY

WILLIAM PORTEOUS, D.D.

ONE OF THE MINISTERS OF GLASGOW.

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1793.

APR

TO

THE HONOURABLE

GILBERT HAMILTON,

LORD PROVOST OF GLASGOW,

ROBERT MUIRHEAD, Esq.
LAURENCE CRAIGIE, Esq. } BAILIES;
ROBERT ROBERTSON, Esq.

JOHN DUNLOP, Esq. DEAN OF GUILD,

JAMES McLEHOSE, Esq. DEACON CONVENER;

THE FOLLOWING

DISCOURSES

ARE MOST RESPECTFULLY INSCRIBED,

BY THEIR MOST OBEDIENT, AND

MOST FAITHFUL SERVANT,

WILLIAM PORTEOUS.

GLASGOW,
1st May, 1793.

1608/4335.

DISCOURSE I.

JEREMIAH vi. 16.

Thus ſaith the Lord, Stand ye in the ways, and ſee, and aſk for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye ſhall find reſt for your ſouls: But they ſaid, We will not walk therein.

THE kingdom of Iſrael had enjoyed peace, and a very uncommon degree of proſperity, in the reigns of Solomon, and ſome of his ſucceſſors.—In the time of her proſperity, Judah had adorned her principal city with ſtrong, ſplendid and expenſive buildings. The houſes of the citizens are deſcribed as being palaces;—but proſperity had corrupted the people, and in conformity to the great plan of Divine Providence, they are to be viſited with adverſity, corrected and humbled, under the hand of God.

"PREPARE ye war againſt Judah," is the cry of her enemies.—They are ſo impatient for the battle, that they are willing to march in the heat of the day, in the cool of the evening, or in the darkneſs of the night, to deſtroy her palaces.—Is it not juſt, is it not wiſe, is it not neceſſary, for Judah to ſound the trumpet in Tekoa, and ſet up the ſign of fire in Beth-haccerem, to alarm the people, and prepare for a vigorous defence? Deſtruction was determined—their country, their city, and their temple are devoted to it.

IN theſe circumſtances were the people of Judah, when the prophet Jeremiah is ſent, by God himſelf, to give them warning and advice. Many of the Jews were not diſpoſed to liſten to his warning; becauſe their ears were not circumciſed, the word of the Lord was conſidered as a reproach; they had no delight in it, neither were they duly affected with thoſe ſins which had brought them to the brink of deſtruction: but ſtill they were not entirely hardened, and therefore the prophet is ſent with the advice in the text.

IT is addreſſed to men who did not *enjoy* reſt in their ſouls, but earneſtly *deſired* it.—They were ſurpriſed with the approach of unexpected calamities—they were aſtoniſhed with the greatneſs

of

of the threatened deſtruction—they could not diſcover, or, at leaſt, they could not diſtinguiſh the road to ſafety and *reſt*.

THE prophet repreſents their ſituation under the figure of a man ſetting out on a moſt important journey, without knowing the road which he ought to prefer.—His advice to them, and to you, if your circumſtances are ſimilar, is, That you ought not to proceed in this journey, till you have put yourſelves in a proper ſituation for determining which is the preferable way.—You are to ſtand ſtill, at the place where the roads ſeparate; you are to examine each, as far as your eye can reach.—Even after this is done, you are not to determine raſhly; you are neither to truſt entirely to your ſenſes, your obſervation, or your underſtanding, while other ſources of information are acceſſible, and not reſorted to.—Though one of the roads may be more inviting than the reſt, ſo far as you ſee or know, yet when you proceed thus far, you may find yourſelves involved in new and unforeſeen difficulties, expoſed to great and fatal dangers, the appearance of which may render it neceſſary to return, with grief and diſappointment, to the place from whence you ſet out.—You are, therefore, *to ſtand in the ways and ſee*, to make the beſt of your own

powers; but do not truſt to them, while you may derive additional evidence from the *information* of others, concerning thoſe parts of the road which you can neither ſee nor know. The prophet adviſes you to *enquire* of thoſe who have more knowledge, or more experience than yourſelves; and he mentions two particulars to which your enquiries ſhould be directed.—The quality of the road—*Is it good?* And the ſucceſs of thoſe who have travelled in it—*Aſk for the old paths—Where is the good way?—and walk therein.*

The Jews of Jeremiah's time are repreſented as rejecting this advice.—Impelled by the hurry of their agitated minds, and by a dreadful apprehenſion of impending danger, they would not ſtand ſtill to deliberate; they would make no enquiries, but precipitated themſelves into that road which *ſeemed* to promiſe beſt.—They formed a haſty opinion, and followed it immediately, without conſulting the experience, or enquiring about the ſucceſs of others.—Charmed with the novelty, and amuſed with the pleaſantneſs of the road, they hurried on, without conſideration, and without fear, till they were incloſed in ſnares—ſurrounded with precipices—*the ſword of the enemy, and fear was on every ſide.*

THIS advice of the prophet, though expreſſed in figurative language, is abundantly intelligible. It holds out to us the counſels of Wiſdom, reſpecting all the great affairs of human life.—It will be applied by every conſiderate man, for regulating his moral, religious and political conduct.—In each of theſe reſpects, our attention to it will promote and ſecure the *reſt of our ſouls*.

IN the following Diſcourſes, the advice in the text is to be applied, agreeably to the occaſion of our meeting—To our *political* conduct as citizens, placed in circumſtances unexpected and alarming.

I SHALL begin with conſidering ſome of theſe alarming circumſtances in our political ſituation, which call for our preſent attention.—Like the Jews, we are brought into war—and, like them, many among ourſelves have given way to a turbulent, ſeditious and ungovernable ſpirit.—In the language of the text, we are *ſeeking* reſt for our ſouls.

NOT many months ago, we might have enjoyed this reſt.—Our proſperity was in a degree far higher than ever our fathers had experienced.—The land was filled with plenty, and the people were in full enjoyment of peace. The minds of men

men were not agitated with political debate, nor ruffled by thoſe angry paſſions which grow from contention.—There was plenty of employment for the induſtrious—ample rewards for ingenuity—and full ſecurity in the poſſeſſion and enjoyment of our ſubſtance.—There was a ſtrong probability that theſe happy days would not be few—that our childrens children would taſte of their ſweetneſs—and that the concluſion of the eighteenth century would be marked, not only in the page of hiſtory, but on the face of our country, and on the circumſtances of our poſterity, as the commencement of an Æra, in which opulence was to deſcend to the loweſt ranks, and induſtry to make its progreſs to the moſt remote and uncultivated parts of the land.

It *now* appears, and it is a moſt unfortunate, but important diſcovery, that we did not poſſeſs theſe qualities which are neceſſary for enjoying ſo much proſperity.—We were ſurfeited with this manna.—We wanted that moderation and ſoberneſs of mind which are neceſſary to the happineſs of man; and now, after many grievous diſappointments, we are *ſeeking* that neceſſary ingredient in human happineſs, *reſt for our ſouls.*—We muſt be ſenſible that our circumſtances are altered.—In place of the ſunſhine of proſperity,

we

we ſee a dark cloud ready to burſt, and to pour down its collected waters:—The flaſhes of the lightning have been ſeen—the thunder rolls over our heads—alarm and danger are on every ſide.

We have ſeen the ax laid to the root of our proſperity, and the hands of our neighbours vigorouſly employed in hewing it down.—With aſtoniſhment, and with grief, we beheld the unnatural and daring attempt.—We ſaw deluſion in its rapid career:—Every day we expected the return of ſober-mindedneſs—but, for many days, it did not return.—We beheld a few individuals, abandoning almoſt every principle of duty and of loyalty.—They were not reſtrained even by the principles of their own admired republicaniſm; for they themſelves, though few in number, endeavoured to deprive the PEOPLE of a Conſtitution, which they venerate—of a Sovereign, whom they love and honour—and of a Government, which they think the beſt; and which has undoubtedly been able to defend our country—to protect its meaneſt citizen in the enjoyment of all his rights—to give proſperity and peace to all who deſerve them. Theſe ineſtimable privileges were to be wreſted from us, by a few individuals, no leſs hoſtile to our religion, than to our peace.—Not ſatisfied with perſecuting us at home, they

had

had recourſe to our ancient foes, to them they miſrepreſented the ſtate of this country.—Pretending to believe that their own opinions were the opinions of the people, they ſolicited the aid, and courted the friendſhip of France.—That intoxicated people liſtened with rapture to the Siren's ſong, and, like the ungrateful ſons of liberty at home, they defied our power—they reviled our Sovereign—they defamed our Government, and threw down the gauntlet of war.

In defence of our *rights*—in defence of our *allies*, we were forced into the field, and are yet engaged in the contentions of war.—A war which was neither the intereſt, nor the choice of this country.—A war which muſt involve the deſtruction of many men, and which has already clipt the wings of our riſing proſperity:—But we truſt in the God of battles, that this war will be ſhort in its duration, and, to us, ſucceſsful in its iſſue:—Becauſe it is juſt, and even neceſſary, for the ſecurity of our peace—for the enjoyment of our liberty and property, and for the preſervation of our holy religion, as delivered to us by prophets and apoſtles, and by the Son of God himſelf.—This war could not have been otherwiſe avoided, than by our becoming a Department of France, and ſubmitting to the government of men who cannot govern themſelves.

In ſpeaking of our preſent circumſtances, there is another particular, of ſuch magnitude that it cannot eſcape our notice—it obſcures our brighteſt proſpects, and threatens us with a multitude of evils:—It is a want of *ſubordination*, a want of reſpect and ſubmiſſion to conſtituted authorities; or, what the ſcriptures ſpeak of, *as the powers which are*.—The French Convention requires us to pull up theſe.—The holy ſcriptures require us to be ſubject to them for conſcience ſake.—So direct is the oppoſition between theſe two.—

Without having much veneration for the French Convention, we are too much diſpoſed to adopt ſome of their worſt principles.—Under the diſguiſe of independence, and the ſacred right of private judgment, their philoſophers have brought forward a monſter, which threatens deſtruction to all civil ſociety.—This will be moſt ſpeedily, and moſt effectually accompliſhed, by pulling up that ſenſe of authority on which the whole fabric is built.

Respect for authority, grows with every growing ſtate.—It is the companion of proſperity, of order and ſocial happineſs. While this remains, we may be aſſured of the ſtability of our country.—It decays, only in a declining ſtate—

and if ever it ſhall be loſt, civilization itſelf will expire.

With what anxiety do we look around us for the ſymptoms of this ſubmiſſion, which is ſo indiſpenſibly neceſſary to the happineſs of man in ſociety.—We go into *public places*, but there we find the ferocious look of affected dignity, aſſumed by a ſilly pride, and only tolerated by the ſpirit of the times.

In *families*, the authority of *parents* is diſregarded, by the boy who has not yet put on the apparel of a man.

The authority of the *maſter*, muſt give way to the inſolent humours, unjuſt claims, and undue liberties of the ſervant.

The authority of *age* is diſhonoured, by the petulance of youth.

The authority of *magiſtrates* is, ſometimes, diſregarded, diſputed, oppoſed, reſiſted, overawed, intimidated—by the rich—by the poor—by the proud—by the contentious, and by the profligate.

HUMAN authority, even in its moſt *exalted* and *venerable* forms, is lightly eſteemed—wantonly criticiſed—ſeverely cenſured, and the minds of many are in a courſe of preparation for evils ſtill worſe than theſe.—Such diſorders are of a very alarming and threatening nature.—How much more ſo, when it is added, That they are INCURABLE!—While men continue to diſregard the authority of GOD, they are *incurable*.

THAT the authority of GOD is diſregarded, is a truth too obvious to be denied.—I ſpeak not of Frenchmen, or French philoſophy, or French politics: In that country, Atheiſm and Anarchy have grown to maturity; this people have hardened themſelves againſt God.—But, *among ourſelves*, the authority even of GOD is ſeldom regarded.—When we turn our thoughts to the houſe of God—to the obſervation of the Sabbath—to the the duty of prayer—to the inſtitution of the Lord's ſupper—to the adminiſtration of oaths, and to a thouſand other objects, we are left to deplore a decayed and expiring ſenſe of Divine authority.

THIS ſtate of things muſt *neceſſarily* be accompanied by a want of ſubordination, and many diſorders in civil ſociety. The man who breaks

aſunder the bands of Divine authority, will very ſeldom be reſtrained by the feeble cords of that which is human.

I SHALL, therefore, conclude this Diſcourſe with obſerving, to the friends of order and ſocial happineſs—That there is one way, and only one, by which human authority can be reſtored to its proper influence, and that is, by *inculcating*, *exemplifying*, and *encouraging* a high veneration for the authority of GOD.

HAVING ſhortly delineated our preſent ſituation, I ſhould proceed to point out the wiſdom and ſuitableneſs of the prophet's advices: *Stand ye in the ways, and ſee, and aſk for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye ſhall find reſt for your ſouls.*

THESE will be the ſubjects of another Diſcourſe.

DISCOURSE

DISCOURSE II.

JEREMIAH vi. 16.

Thus ſaith the Lord, Stand ye in the ways, and ſee, and aſk for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye ſhall find reſt for your ſouls: But they ſaid, We will not walk therein.

IT may be doubted, how far it is proper for the bulk of mankind to employ themſelves in political reſearches, or, how far they are qualified for ſuch diſcuſſions?—There are, however, ſome circumſtances and occaſions, in which ſuch exerciſes muſt be *proper;* becauſe they are *neceſſary:*—But in every caſe, it will be wiſe to follow the advices in the text.

1. WE ſhould *ſtand in the ways.* We ought to ſeek proper opportunities for cool diſcuſſion, and calm

calm deliberation; we ought to improve these opportunities, and by no means to be hasty in our determinations.—The Jews are directed to go into the ways, where observations might be made, and information received:—In this situation they were to *stand*—to observe—to enquire, and to deliberate.

When a matter of importance is to be searched out, the *company* of passionate men is almost as dangerous as a *mind* under the influence of passion; both the one and the other exclude the light, disguise the truth, and betray into error.—Cool ourselves, and free from the influence of every passion—let us associate with others of the same description, then, we shall receive the information of truth, and hear the dictates of wisdom.—We may consider it as a rule, That wherever passion predominates, wisdom does not dwell; and, therefore, we ought never to form a plan of conduct, or adopt a system of opinions, till we have renounced all communication with passion.—Even in the coolest hour, and among the coolest men, we should not form our opinions rashly.—Rashness is a never-failing attendant on folly—it leads to error—it is followed by disappointment and vexation of heart—it produces fickleness in opinion, and inconsistency in conduct.—

duct.—If there is a ſituation where true information may be expected, either from our own obſervations, or from the diſcourſe of moderate men, let us go and ſtand there.

2. We ſhould make obſervations on the *ways*. We are now in queſt of the road to political happineſs.—Where does it begin? What is its direction? And how is it to be followed, ſo as to enſure ſucceſs?—Let us go into the ways and *ſee*.—Let us endeavour to obſerve accurately, to think ſoberly on this ſubject; and, ſince it muſt be ſo, let us begin our deliberations immediately.

Political happineſs is to be enjoyed only in ſociety.—The political combinations, which we call ſocieties, are compoſed of men. Theſe are undeniable truths.—According to the characters and diſpoſitions of theſe men, ſo muſt be the political inſtitutions by which the happineſs of the people is to be ſecured.—This may require ſome illuſtration.

If a ſociety conſiſted only of *angels*, there would be *no* occaſion for either civil or criminal laws; for no individual would be diſpoſed to injure another in his perſon or property.—Again, if the ſociety conſiſted entirely of *ſaints*, they might

might be very happy, though the laws were *few*, and the adminiſtration of juſtice *feeble*; becauſe in ſuch a ſociety, the propenſity to commit injury could not be ſtrong. But if the ſociety were compoſed of *corrupted men*; ſome of theſe would employ their ingenuity to evade the laws, others would diſobey, and others defy them.—In ſuch a ſtate, where men are prone to injuſtice, the laws muſt be numerous; the adminiſtration of juſtice, and of government muſt be ſtrong, vigorous, irreſiſtible; otherwiſe, there could be no ſecurity, and conſequently no political happineſs.

BOTH religion and ſound philoſophy agree in pronouncing all men *corrupted*.—But among different men, and in different ſtates, there are different degrees, as well as kinds of corruption.—We can ſuppoſe a ſociety of men ſo ſmall, and ſo harmleſs, as to be eaſily reſtrained from injuring one another:—The feeble hand of a Patriarch, an Elder, or a Chief, may be ſufficient to govern ſuch a ſociety.—On the other hand, we can as eaſily ſuppoſe a ſociety ſo large, as not to be managed by a government of this kind, and ſo corrupted, as to be ruled only by force.—In this laſt caſe, deſpotic kings, ſtanding armies, and laws, which in other caſes would be tyrannical, may be neceſſary for the ſecurity of the people.—

Suppoſe

Suppoſe, for example, a ſociety formed of a thouſand ſuch men as we ſee enliſting in the army, you cannot believe that it would be poſſible to govern them, by the gentle admonitions of a patriarchal government. On the contrary, it has been found, by the experience of ages,—That no civil diſcipline, no ordinary adminiſtration of juſtice, not even that which is ſufficient in other caſes in the ſame country, is ſufficient for reſtraining them.—They muſt have a military law—military diſcipline—a peculiar ſtrictneſs and ſeverity in the adminiſtration of juſtice.

By theſe obſervations, I hope your minds are in ſome degree prepared for a remark of the higheſt importance in your political deliberations. "That the goodneſs or badneſs of a government "is not to be determined, merely, by comparing "it with a philoſophical theory, which may be "exceedingly beautiful in itſelf, but uſeleſs, or "even ruinous to a particular country, to which "it is not adapted."

ANOTHER obſervation is, That in proportion to the degree of corruption in any country, its government muſt be proportionally more ſimple and vigorous: Or, in other words, that the tendency of corruption in the people, is to an abſo-

lute,

lute, arbitrary, or, it may lead even to a military government. And when this corruption has risen to a certain height, such a government will not only be good for such a people, but it will be necessary for their mutual security.

If, therefore, we were to form a government for a particular country, the very first thing to be known, is, the degree of corruption existing in that country.—Then we would be able to determine, with understanding and judgment, what kind of government is adapted to their condition.

If we turn our thoughts to America, there we will find a nation beginning their career, not much corrupted by riches, luxury, philosophy, or politics; living in remote situations, and in an agricultural state. This people may be managed by a government not far from republican.—Political privileges may be extended to a large circle, without being greatly abused.—But, as they advance in corruption, their government must become more simple and vigorous, in order to preserve security and political happiness.—Already, America has found the necessity of making advances in this way, by giving additional strength

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to her government; and, in a short time, still more is likely to be necessary.

Let us next take a view of France, and especially of its enormous capital; there we find a people who have gone through the whole course of corruption.—If American institutions were applied to them, they would immediately break these feeble bands, and find them wholly unfit for their government.—They have in fact formed many such plans of government—beautiful indeed—but they were constructed for angels, or saints, not for Frenchmen.—We have seen, and they have felt the consequences.—They considered the philosophical theory, but not the state of society: they entirely overlooked the corruption of the people. This was so completely true, that their whole institutions indicate an opinion, that the people were but a little corrupted.—They gave privileges, but the people were without principle.—They gave them power, but they wanted moderation.—They affected to bring legal punishments to the standard of philosophical sentiment, not considering, that the people were not philosophers, and that even the severities of despotism were scarcely able to restrain them from enormities.

THE history of the Jews is more familiar to us, than the extravagant theories of France.—It holds up to us the history of men, of society, and governments.

THE people of Israel were in bondage and oppression in Egypt—their minds were degraded and debased by the tyranny of Pharaoh.—God intended to transplant them from the house of bondage, to a land of liberty, which lay within four days journey. But God Almighty found it necessary to make them men, before he made them free.—He carried them into the wilderness—he reduced them to poverty and dependence—he put them under military discipline—he formed them to a sense of religion, and of subjection to authority—he detained them forty years in the wilderness—but even this course of education was not sufficient.—The whole generation who had come out of Egypt must be cut off.—They could not be prepared for freedom.—A new generation, who had acquired the character and the habits peculiar to freemen, were brought into Canaan. There God gave them an agrarian law—a mild government—Political privileges were extended to the elders of the people, and they had no higher magistrate than a judge. God, however, foresaw that they would not always remain in the

first

first stage of corruption, and that their present government would not be sufficient to restrain a more corrupted people.—In that case God promised them a king. Afterwards, they themselves became sensible that a royal government was necessary for their security and political happiness.—It soon appeared that a feeble monarchy, like that of Saul, was not adequate to the corruption of the people.—Then God raised David to the throne, and, in his government, there was energy sufficient for maintaining security and order.

Such is the progress of society—from oppression to liberty, and from republicanism to royal governments.

The best government, for any people, is that which is proportioned to the degree of their corruption, and adapted to the kind of it.

This is the first and fundamental principle on which all our political deliberations should proceed, and on which all our political estimates should be formed.

It is not an easy matter to form a just opinion of the degree of corruption existing in a *large* society, especially in a *distant* society, with the state

of

of which we are not particularly acquainted.—Yet every man thinks himself qualified to judge of the government of such countries, though he does not *stand in the ways and see*, that is, though his opinions are not founded on the observation of facts, yet he boasts of his knowledge.—Let him not also boast of his modesty.

3. The prophet not only advises the people to *stand in the ways and see*, that is, to make judicious observations on men and things.—But, to *ask for the old paths, where is the good way?*

It is one of the peculiarities of the new philosophy, that it abandons the old paths, and soars high above the region of experience.—It judges only from its own ideas and theories, and these whimsical judgments are named the conclusions of reason.—As such, they are highly respected.—Upon these they build systems of Government, and systems of Atheism.—The fruits they have produced are, murders—massacres and assassinations—injustice, fraud and every evil work—these have already been introduced and *recommended*, as the conclusions of reason.

Here we cannot doubt that something is far wrong.—Let us take a nearer view of this *new*

way

way, to very different from any thing recommended by experience.

The people of France were a giddy, diſſipated and oppreſſed people, partly ſuperſtitious, and partly deſtitute of religion.—They groaned under the yoke of tyranny, and they embraced an opportunity for breaking it.—They believed that too much could not be done to ſecure them from oppreſſion.—They pulled down the deſpotiſm, and the ſuperſtition.—But they likewiſe pulled down religion and government.—They determined to make all things new—and they did ſo:—They laid the foundation of their *new* ſyſtem, on this *new* principle—That public expediency is the true and only ſtandard of right and wrong:—And, accordingly, the ruling powers have uniformly done what they thought expedient. They ſaw it expedient to apply the theories of philoſophers, and the rhapſodies of poets to the ſtate of ſociety exiſting in France. Out of theſe untried materials, they made a new conſtitution, comprehending, as they ſaid, nothing but the concluſions of reaſon—and they ſwore for ever to maintain this code of enlightened philoſophy.—By and by, they found they had miſtaken their guide, and reſolved to pull down the fabric they had ſworn to ſupport.—They pulled it down, becauſe they thought

it

is expedient to do so.—They have attempted to erect another, ſtill more contrary to experience, and ſtill leſs adapted to the people who are to live under it.—At one time, they judged it expedient to live in peace with all men:—at another, they proclaim war againſt the moſt powerful ſtates of Europe.—At one time, they renounce the idea of conqueſt:—at another, they require all, whom their arms can reach, to become ſubjects of France.—At one time, it is expedient to mitigate criminal puniſhments:—at another, they approve of maſſacres, and indemnify thoſe who commit them.—At one time, they honour their king:—at another, they put him to death.—And at one time or another, all theſe things are announced as the concluſions of reaſon.—They are held up as matters of public expediency.

Is it poſſible that a regular and laſting government can exiſt amidſt this entire want of every principle, religious, moral, and even political?—Is is impoſſible.—What ſecurity can they give to their own people, or to their neighbours, for the enjoyment of peace and ſafety?—In France, every thing is afloat, and the firſt wind may drive away the moſt popular doctrines, and the moſt approved maxims—leaving nothing behind, but men of no principles, to be judges of expediency.

It will readily be admitted, that this is a *new* way to political happineſs, ſo completely new, that it has never been trode by the foot of man:—It will not probably become an old path—for it is equally a ſtranger to goodneſs and age.

Having heard of this new way, we turn from it with diſguſt and abhorrence.

Fondness of innovation, is full proof of a weak, conceited, and fooliſh mind. But if we would paſs ſafely through human life, we muſt remember, that the progreſs of wiſdom is ſlow, and that we need to collect all the gleanings of former ages, in addition to our own experience.—Let us, therefore, *aſk* for the *old* paths, and impartially conſider how far they are *good*.

We, and our fathers, have been ſo long accuſtomed to the ſame civil Conſtitution, and the ſame Government, adminiſtered under the ſame principles, and according to the ſame plan, that it may now be called, The *old way* to political happineſs. It is ſo old, as to be reſpected by the wiſe, and objected to, on account of its age, only by the dupes of innovation.

Let us, however, neither admit nor reject our civil Conſtitution, on account of its duration—but

let us candidly enquire into its goodneſs. This is to be determined, not by conjecture or ſpeculation, but by facts, and theſe too of ſuch a kind as to defy the cavils of ſeditious men.

THERE are two effects produced by a good civil conſtitution, and a wiſe adminiſtration of government, which can be produced by *no other* cauſe. Theſe are the ſecurity and the proſperity of the people.—Let us conſider in what degree we have enjoyed theſe.

OUR internal peace—our reputation among the nations, and our national proſperity have never been raiſed ſo high, or enjoyed ſo fully, as during the preſent century.—It would be vain to attempt enumerating the particulars—nor is it neceſſary.—Our food—our raiment—our accommodation—our cities—our fields, and even the ocean itſelf, declare our proſperity.

WHEN we look abroad among the nations—Which of them is ſo happy in the full enjoyment of religious liberty—of perſonal ſecurity—of political happineſs?

THANKS be to God, the great Ruler of the world, we are not governed by the *will* of the people,

people, nor by any *repreſentation* of their *will*. Our fathers made an attempt to collect the WISDOM of the people:—It is poſſible that ſome better method of doing this may yet be diſcovered; but when we conſider, that the purpoſe for which this is attempted, is the political happineſs of the people—that this political happineſs conſiſts of ſecurity, induſtry, and proſperity, and that all theſe are already enjoyed, in a very high degree, by the people of this country—we will form no mean opinion of the wiſdom or public ſpirit of our fathers.—Our proſperity clearly proves, that, hitherto, we have not failed in collecting the wiſdom of the people.—It proves this truth in the moſt agreeable as well as in the moſt concluſive manner.

But I hear it ſaid, This *old way* is perhaps very good, but ſtill it might be made better, and we ſhould always be improving.—This puts one in mind of a patient, who complained of pain in his feet.—His own regular phyſician recommended patience and thankfulneſs; but a quack came to that city, and after much diſcourſe about the cure of diſeaſes, he undertook to remove the pain of which the patient complained—he did ſo, but he removed it into the vital parts, and the patient died.—A wiſe man will be on his guard againſt him who profeſſes to remove all diſorders,

whether from the natural or the political body—and he will not forget, that, to man, mediocrity is a great attainment.

By theſe obſervations we are led to another concluſion, "That the goodneſs of a civil conſtitu-"tion is to be diſcovered, not by theory and ſpe-"culation—not by declamation and debate, but by "the PROSPERITY OF THE PEOPLE." This is the true ſtandard for judging of a good government. The proſperity of the people, is the only end of political aſſociations, and every government is good, in proportion as this end is attained.

The people ought to know, to believe, and to convince all men, that this is true. When the Rulers know that the people judge of their meaſures by their own proſperity, they will be ſtudious to promote it. It will be their intereſt, and their ambition, to give you proſperity; but the moment they come to know that you judge of their meaſures by any other ſtandard, they will employ other means, and other inſtitutions, to accompliſh their ends:—They will eaſily find plumbs to pleaſe children.

When the people know that their proſperity is the end of civil government, and find themſelves

ſelves in poſſeſſion of it—they will tremble at the thoughts of innovation—they will honour the King—they will be thankful to their Rulers—they will be contented with their own ſituation—they will pray for its continuance, and will not *meddle with them that are given to change, whoſe deſtruction cometh ſpeedily.*

THE dutiful ſubjects of a good government, and only theſe, ſhall experience that *reſt of ſoul* which grows from a deliberate preference to the good old way, prepared by wiſdom, and approved by experience.

UNWILLINGLY I call back your attention to thoſe, among ourſelves, who are fond of innovation—who have attempted to diſturb the peace of this country, and have ſucceeded ſo far as to involve us in a war.—And I aſk you this queſtion, Have *they* found reſt for their ſouls? We cannot pronounce concerning the ſtate of their minds by intuition;—but, Is the tendency of their converſation peaceable?—Are their companions men of peace?—and, Does peace reſide in their neighbourhood? I am afraid, that, in many inſtances, it will appear, that they have not yet found reſt for their ſouls.

WE

We ſhall now conſider the laſt part of the prophet's advice, *and walk therein.* It is not enough to give a cold approbation to the good old way.—You muſt walk in it.—You muſt make progreſs.—Your advances muſt not be raſh and precipitate, even in a good and a tried path; but they muſt be regular and ſteady.—Proſperity cannot be taken by ſurpriſe, or aſſault, but ſhe will ſurrender to ſlow and regular approaches.

WALK in this way, and ſuffer no man to joſtle you out of it. The way is good—it has been tried.—It was the way of your fathers—it is yours;—and if any ſhould perſiſt in attempting to deprive you of it, defend yourſelves—defend your rights.—This is the true uſe of compulſion and force.—This is not only a juſt, but a commendable application of theſe;—and, if any one ſhould ſay, Shall we go up and fight againſt our brethren?—The reply is from God himſelf, in a ſimilar caſe, GO UP.

OFFENSIVE war is provoking to God.—The defence of our rights is acceptable in his ſight; and, of all others, this is one of the moſt unqueſtionable—*the right of walking in the good old way.*

THE END.